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Letter from John James Audubon to William G. Bakewell, February 20, 1831

John James Audubon

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2.
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Edinburgh Feb 7. 20th 1831 —

My Dear William —

I find myself in a manner forced to publish a small Edition of 500 Copies of my first Volume of Ornithological Biography in the U. S. to found the Copy right thereof. —

Philadelphia is the Place I have pitched on for my undertaking — and I employ there Dr. — Mc Murtry as the conductor of the proof sheets — and Dr. — Richard Harlan as my Banker or money agent, for the payment of the sum which I will have to disburse on account of said publication —

I send him now (this day) through our friend Mr. — W. — Rathbone Esq of Liverpool one hundred pounds Sterling or £100 — which will be paid into the hands of Mr. — W. — Rathbone Esq of Philadelphia. ~~for the said~~ I request Dr. — Harlan to receive from Mr. — W. — Rathbone a further sum of £50 Dollars which they had to collect for me from Dr. — Nath. L. D. Potter of Richmond, who's note I gave them and which became due on the 1st Dec^r last — provided you have not drawn on the Bankers for that sum of £50 Dollars. —

Should you have drawn & receive that sum, I wish you to write to Dr. — Rich^d — Harlan and tell him that you will send to him that sum which he wants, & on my account whenever he may choose to need it. — The amount which he will have to pay is altogether good & perhaps something less. —

I have written to Dr. — Harlan to that effect, as well as to Dr. — Mc Murtry, because the latter wish to me that unless I have a responsible friend in the U. S. he will not undertake the publication — and should the publication fail to take place through me and under my name, I must lose the Copy right of my book in the United S. — when any Bookeller might publish & reap the benefit arising from it. I wish you to write to me as soon as you can to let me know that you sent your approbation —

I have requested Dr. — Harlan that in case of our death (Lug & I) — our next payee to America to give ^{for} the Copy (Doo) to Victor who must dispose of them the best way he can on account of his Brother John & himself Victor. — Lug will add something to this and as I am much pressed for time you must excuse this short letter for the present. — give our united best wishes to your dear Wife & the three Boys and believe me your friend John. I. Hudson

Yours by Duplicate —

W. B. Bakewell
Louisville Kentucky
America —

46. 20. 1841
Dunlop

JOHN JAMES AUDUBON TO WILLIAM G. BAKEWELL

February 20, 1831

Edinburgh Feb^y. 20th 1831—

My Dear William¹—

I find myself in a manner forced to publish a small Edition of 500 Copies of my first volume of “*Ornithological Biography*” in the U.S. to secure the Copy right thereof.—

Philadelphia is the Placed I have pitched on for this undertaking—and I employ there Doc^r McMurtry² as the corrector of the proof Sheets—and Doc^r Richard Harlan³ as my Banker or money agent, for the payment of the Sum which I will have to disbursed on account of Said publication—

I Send him now (this day) through our Friends Mess^{rs} W^{am} Rathbone & C^{oa} of Liverpool one hundred pounds sterling or 444 Dollars 44/100—which will be placed into the hands of Mess^{rs} Tho^s Walker & C^{os} of Philadelphia. ~~^for the Doctor^~~—— I request Doc^r Harlan to receive from the Walkers a further sum of 250 Dollars which they had to collect for me from Doc^r Nath^l D. Potter⁶ of Baltimore, whose note I gave them and which became due on the 1^t Dec^r last—*provided* you have not drawn on the Walkers for that Sum of 250 Dollars.—

Should you have drawn & receive that Sum, I wish you to write to Doc^r Rich^d Harlan and tell him that you will *remit to him* that Sum Should he want it on my account whenever he may chance to need it. ———the amount which he will have to pay is altogether 700\$ or perhaps Something less.—

¹ William Gifford Bakewell (1799-1871) of Louisville, KY, the youngest brother of Audubon’s wife, Lucy. B. G. Bakewell, comp., *The Family Book of Bakewell*Page*Campbell: Being Some Account of the Descendants of John Bakewell, of Castle Donington, Leicestershire, England, born in 1638. Benjamin Page, born in 1765, at Norwich, England. William Campbell, born July 1, 1766, at Mauchline, Ayrshire, Scotland. John Harding, of Leicester* (Pittsburgh: Wm. G. Johnston & Co., 1896), 28, 43-44.

² Henry McMurtrie, M.D. (1793-1865), a Philadelphia physician, author, and educator whom Audubon met in Philadelphia in 1824 while seeking support for the publication of his portfolio of bird illustrations. Peter B. Logan, *Audubon: America’s Greatest Naturalist and His Voyage of Discovery to Labrador* (San Francisco: Ashbryn Press, 2016), 492n337; Lucy Audubon, ed., *The Life of John James Audubon, the Naturalist* (New York: G. P. Putnam & Son, 1869), 102.

³ Richard Harlan, M.D. (1796-1843), a Quaker physician, scientist, naturalist, and one of Audubon’s early supporters in Philadelphia. Logan, *Audubon*, 36, 491n327.

⁴ Rathbone Brothers & Co., a Liverpool mercantile firm that played a major role in the American cotton trade. William Rathbone V (1787-1868), the managing partner, and his younger brother, Richard Rathbone (1788-1860), were among the first members of the city’s elite to befriend Audubon upon his arrival in England in July 1826 and thereafter helped solicit support for his efforts to publish *The Birds of America*. Logan, *Audubon*, 39-42, 497n11, 499n15.

⁵ Thomas E. Walker & Co. was located at 15 North Fourth Street in Philadelphia. Robert Desilver, “List of Packets, Stages, &c,” *Desilver’s Philadelphia Directory, and Stranger’s Guide: 1831* (Philadelphia: Robert Desilver, 1831).

⁶ Nathaniel D. Potter, M.D. (1770-1843), a Baltimore subscriber to *The Birds of America*. His copy of the folio, known as the “Tilden set” after a subsequent owner, Samuel J. Tilden of New York City, is now at the New York Public Library. Waldemar E. Fries and Suzanne M. Low, *The Double Elephant Folio: The Story of Audubon’s Birds of America* (2nd ed.) (Amherst, MA: Zenaida Publishing, Inc., 2006), 292-293, 457.

I have written to Doc^r Harlan to that effect, as well as to Doc^r McMurtry, because the latter [MS. later] wrote to me that unless I have a responsible in the U.S. he could not undertake the publication—and Should this publication fail to take place through me and under my name, I Must lose the *Copy right* of my book in the United S.—when any Bookseller might publish it & reap the benefit arising from it—

I wish you to write to me as soon as you can to let me know that this meets your approbation——

I have requested Doc^r Harlan that in case of our Deaths (Lucy & I) ~~^take place^~~ on our next passage to America to give ^{^over^} the copies (500) to Victor⁷ who must dispose of them the best way he can on account of his Brother John⁸ & himself Victor. ———Lucy will add something to this ~~and~~ as I am much pressed for time you must excuse this Short letter for the present.—give our united best wishes to your Dear Wife⁹ & the three *Boys* and Family¹⁰ and believe me your friend

John. J. Audubon

this goes by Duplicate—

W. G. Bakewell
Louisville Kentucky
America—

Transcribed by Peter B. Logan, author of *Audubon: America's Greatest Naturalist and His Voyage of Discovery to Labrador* (San Francisco: Ashbryn Press, 2016).

⁷ Victor Gifford Audubon (1809-1860), Audubon's eldest son. Bakewell, *The Family Book of Bakewell*, 31.

⁸ John Woodhouse Audubon (1812-1862), Audubon's youngest son. Bakewell, *The Family Book of Bakewell*, 32.

⁹ Alicia Adelaide Bakewell (*née* Matthews) (c.1809-1847), the wife of William G. Bakewell. Bakewell, *The Family Book of Bakewell*, 28, 43-44.

¹⁰ William Bakewell and his wife were childless, so this appears to be a reference to the three sons and family of Audubon's brother- and sister-in-law Nicholas Berthoud (1786-1849) and his wife, Eliza (1790-1853), who was Lucy's younger sister. The Berthoud family lived near Louisville in Shippingport, KY. Logan, *Audubon*, 458n54-55, 649n90; Bakewell, *The Family Book of Bakewell*, 41-42, 44.